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This paper investigates the difference in achievement among 20 University of Utah students of modern standard Arabic. One group of 11 students followed an intensive eight-week summer course, and a second group of nine students studied the same course during a regular academic year. Also reported on is the correlation between achievement and language aptitude as tested by the Modern Language Aptitude Test (Carroll and Sapon's "Modern Language Aptitude Test," New York, The Psychological Corporation, 1959). The author points out the limitation of applicability of the study due to the heterogeneity and small size of the sample, but notes "that there is a rather high correlation between the MLAT as a predictor and the achievement test" results. The non-intensive group seems to have done slightly better on the final achievement test than the intensive group. (MK)

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INTENSIVE VERSUS NON-INTENSIVE ARABIC*

Introduction

A recent trend in teaching foreign languages in the U. S., especially those declared critical, takes the form of conducting an "intensive" course in the target languages. One usually hears nowadays that intensive language courses in the summer represent the wave of the present and future. The advocates of summer intensive language courses claim that they permit ready articulation with the work of the preceding and following years, particularly when the work is done at the same institution; that constant, continuous exposure to the target language reduces the chances of lapses and forgetting; that intensive courses make for quicker usefulness of a foreign language; that the intensive courses assure attainment of the skills needed by elementary and high school teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The present study has been designed to investigate (1) the difference in achievement between a group of college students who studied a course in modern standard Arabic for one academic year and another group who studied the same course in a summer intensive program at the University of Utah; and (2) whether or not there is a correlation between the student's language aptitude and his/her achievement score in the regular and intensive courses.

Subjects

The subjects in this study were twenty college students who registered in the beginning Arabic courses at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

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The students who enrolled during the school year were nine. Five of these students had some Arabic background when they took the course. Eleven students enrolled in the intensive Arabic course in the summer of 1963 at the same University.

Table I shows the major characteristics of the two groups.

Table I

CHARACTERISTICS OF INTENSIVE AND NON-INTENSIVE STUDENTS

Intensive		Non-Intensive	
Case	MLAT Score	Case	MLAT Score
1	136	1	145
2	131	2	145
3	126	3	144
4	125	4	131
5	125	5	117
6	122	6	116
7	118	7	115
8	113	8	101
9	98	9	88
10	97		
11	91		
Mean	116.4	Mean	122.3
A.P.R.[1]	75		80

[1]Approximate Percentile Rank estimated from norms for "students at the Army Language School," Table 3, Manual, Modern Language Aptitude Test (Carroll and Sapon, 1959).

Procedures

Each student in both groups was given ~~John Carroll's~~ the Modern Language Aptitude Test.[1] The scores of all cases are shown in Table 1.

These students were taught literary Arabic by one method. They covered one textbook, "An Elementary Manual of Contemporary Literary Arabic" by this writer. The text consists of twenty-six units, and each unit consists of a reading text, vocabulary list, questions on the reading material, grammar discussion and exercises. At the end of the instruction period (three quarters for the non-intensive group and eight weeks for the intensive), all the students were given the "First Year Arabic Qualifying Examination" by this writer. The test included 112 objective items and covered the following areas: vocabulary (synonyms, antonyms, definitions, and identifications), understanding of written Arabic, grammar, and oral comprehension.

Limitations of Present Study

Although the reader will quickly perceive the more general and technical limitations of the present study, the writer feels it only fair to state as clearly as possible his views on some unique limitations in the present design.

1. A limitation this study shares with many other pieces of research done in this area is that the results were obtained upon a relatively small number of students. This introduces such serious limitations that any generalization will be hazardous.

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[1] John B. Carroll and Stanley M. Sapon. Modern Language Aptitude Test. New York: The Psychological Corporation, 1959.

2. The selection element of the students was not in the design of this study from its very onset. Due to the novelty of the language itself to a number of American colleges and universities, it is unlikely that one could find a hundred students or more enrolled in Arabic on one campus. Thus, the present writer acted on the assumption that a limited study in this area is better than no study at all.

3. A heterogenous group of students is being used in the present study. There is a wide range of language aptitude among the two groups, and no attempt was made to delineate the sample on the basis of MLAT scores or on any other variable.

4. Other limitations, such as measurements, stastistical methods; etc, will not be handled as seperate problems.

Results

For the intensive group (N=11), total score on the achievement test ranged from 80 to 56, with a mean of 64.9. For the non-intensive group (N=9), scores ranged from 97 to 55, with a mean of 78.4. (See Table II)

On the average, there is a slight superiority of the non-intensive group to the intensive group in the MLAT score. In interpreting the fact that the non-intensive group had a higher average score (78.4) on the final achievement test than the intensive group (which had an average score of 64.9), it could be argued that the difference would have been even greater if the groups had been better matched in number and other variables.

In an effort to understand the role of aptitude as measured by the MLAT, scores of the achievement test have been plotted against scores of the MLAT, in Figure I, where it is evident that there is a rather high correlation between the MLAT as a predictor and the achievement test for combined groups (r=76).

A common charge in this regard is that the achievement test used in this experiment could have influenced the results. To avoid such a charge is to

Table II

RESULTS OF ACHIEVEMENT TEST

FOR BOTH GROUPS

Intensive			Non-Intensive		
Case	MLAT Scores	Achievement Scores	Case	MLAT Scores	Achievement Scores
1	136	80	1	145	97
2	131	61	2	145	93
3	126	80	3	144	91
4	125	74	4	131	73
5	125	61	5	117	75
6	122	74	6	116	81
7	118	52	7	115	83
8	113	62	8	101	58
9	98	50	9	88	55
10	97	64			
11	91	56			
Mean	116.4	64.9	Mean	122.3	78.4

r = .76 for combined groups

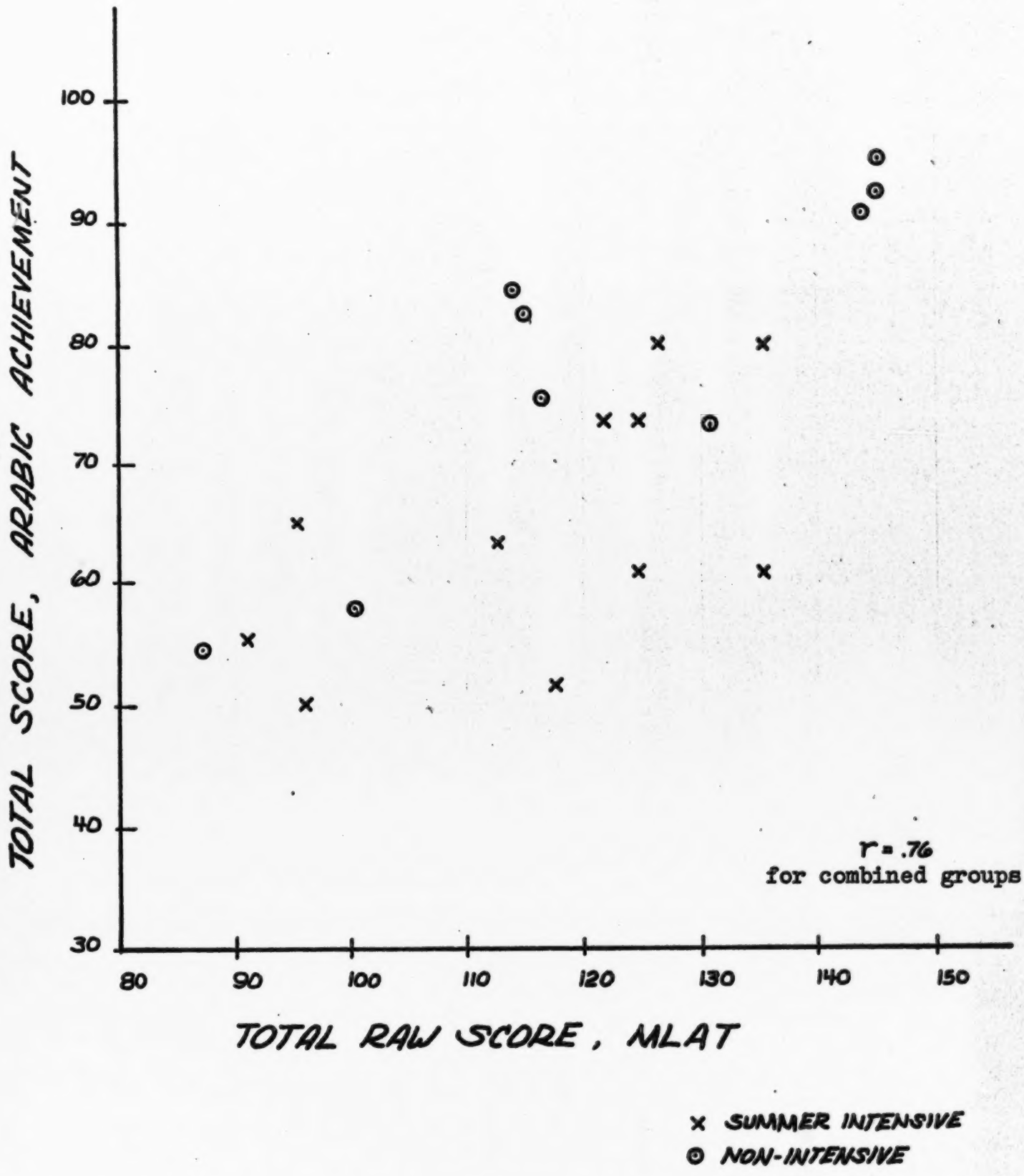

Fig. I Scatterplot of MLAT Scores with Final Achievement test scores.

find some form of test as a valid measure. Such a test is not known to the writer.

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